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ABSTRACT

A training model for the use of rational behavior therapy (RBT) with emotionally disturbed adolescents in a school setting is presented, including a structured, didactic format consisting of five basic RBT training techniques. The training sessions, lasting 10 weeks each, are described. Also presented is the organization for the actual classroom activities, including content, materials, and methods appropriate for each session. (HLM)

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# A MODEL FOR TEACHING RATIONAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING

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The rational emotive psychology movement has contributed significantly to the development of training approaches to explore the behavioral characteristics and emotional dynamics of full and healthy living. Recent writers in special education and rehabilitation have recommended the application of rational approaches to emotionally disturbed individuals in public school settings. In response, this model was developed and research intiated to assess the effects of rational behavior therapy (RBT) upon emotionally disturbed adolescents in a special education public school program.

RBT has been cited in the literature as effective in influencing such variables as academic learning of rational concepts, increased reality-based perceptions, increased time-competence, increased inner-directed support, and behavioral manifestations of social and emotional effectiveness. Scores from measuring instruments to evaluate the above listed constructs served as the dependent variables to examine the effects of RBT in the research study. The measuring instruments used were the RBT Concepts Test; the Common Perception Inventory; Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale; the Personal Orientation Inventory; and the Observational Emotional Inventory. The analysis of covariance was used to compare differences in adjusted posttest group means, with the pretest scores serving as the covariate.

The study was based on the Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. The sample consisted of thirty-four adolescents who had been professionally diagnosed as "emotionally disturbed." Seventeen subjects were randomly assigned to an experimental and seventeen to a control group. Four subjects dropped out of the study and data were collected on thirty subjects. The experimental group received forty minutes of RBT training three days per week for ten weeks. The control group received no training and engaged in the regular activities of the school setting.

## The Training Model

The training model incorporated RBT in a structured, didactic format, consisting of the five following basic RBT training techniques:

1. Teaching the consequent goals of learning the skills involved in RBT in terms of what the accomplishment of these goals could mean to an individual once he had changed his thinking and behavior patterns. The primary goal of RBT training is to teach the skills involved in rational thinking. In

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addition to the primary goal, RBT incorporates several other important secondary goals for its users:

A. Maximum independence from neurotic needs, desires and support of others (including the helping person).

B. Acceptance by the individual of full responsibility for his or her desired behavior changes.

C. Self-determination of goals and values in life.

D. Freeing the person from poorly controlled reactions to environmental stresses.

E. Unqualified acceptance by each person of his unavoidable fallibility.

The above concepts were taught using didactic presentations and group discussions. The materials utilized to teach this segment included a workbook, handouts, and transparencies developed by the instructor. Each subject was given a workbook which he kept throughout the entire training. During the initial portion of the training, the subjects were instructed to skim through the workbook and view the content as means in which they could achieve the above described goals.

The subjects were told at this early stage of their contact with RBT that it was important only that they learn and understand these goals and that they consider them as behaviors they might want to attain in the future. By approaching these goals and consequent behaviors in this manner, no pressure was placed on any subject to change his behavior "automatically" but the cognitive exposure had been accomplished and the subjects had the information and opportunity to build on this if they so desired.

2. Teaching each subject the five basic criteria for rational thinking. Rational behavior is defined as behavior which is in one's own best interest. The criteria for determining rational behavior are:

A. Is it based on objective reality?

B. Is it life-preserving?

C. Is it likely to get me what I want?

D. Is it likely to let me feel the way I want to feel?

E. Is it likely to keep me out of trouble with others?

The instructor introduced the five criteria in a didactic presentation using transparencies. Then, as with the goals discussed in number one above, the

criteria were given to each subject in handout form and discussed via group discussion. In addition, the subjects were instructed to read the workbook section dealing with the five criteria. The subjects were asked to accept the criteria, as they had the goals, on a cognitive basis. The instructor then requested the subjects to begin evaluating their present behavior or potential behavior in terms of meeting the five criteria. Thus, subjects began to systematically think about their thinking and behavior.

Verbal reinforcement for utilizing the five criteria for positive behavior change was given in class or individually by the instructor. No positive behavior change was too small to receive reinforcement and no behavior change of this type was treated minimally. For example, if an individual who acted out in class by cursing, expressing anger toward peers, etc., and then remained calm for a small portion of class, he was given reinforcement for his behavior related to the five criteria for rational behavior.

3. Teaching each student the anatomy of an emotion. This basic concept was taught through didactic presentations, handouts, use of transparencies, and group and individual discussion. The handout contained the following elements of the anatomy of an emotion:

Anatomy of an Emotion

A. Facts and events (perception)

B. Self-talk (evaluating thoughts)

C. Feeling (emotional/behavioral response)

Students were asked to break down a personal emotion into three parts and evaluate the emotion using the five criteria for rational behavior. Students were also given a handout listing a feeling word vocabulary to help them accurately describe their feeling state.

It was important for students to understand the anatomy of an emotion so they could begin to learn to base their perceptions and beliefs on objective reality (testable and validatable facts). They, then, could begin learning how to choose and control emotions which were appropriate to objective situations.

As with the goals and criteria for rational behavior, it was important to see that the subjects developed a cognitive understanding of this concept and that they incorporated it with the first two cognitive learning experiences. The subjects were also taught the idea that individuals evaluate all perceived situations through thoughts, which result in emotions, which are: (1) relatively positive, (2) relatively negative, (3) relatively neutral, or (4) some mixture of the three (19). By making subjects aware of this, they could begin to evaluate their own thoughts about their perceptions which would allow them to gain insight and understanding about the emotions they were having. Subjects were first asked

to break down the anatomy of both positive and negative emotions, followed by exercises breaking down only negative, uncomfortable, self-defeating emotions.

4. Teaching each student the understanding and utilization of the Rational Self-Analysis (RSA). The RSA is made up of six parts each based on one of the three parts of an emotion described in the preceding section. The RSA format is as follows:

Rational Self-Analysis

| | |
|---|---|
| Section A | Section Da |
| Facts and events | Camera check of A |
| (Perception) | |
| Section B | Section Db |
| Self-talk | Rational debate of D |
| (Evaluating thoughts) | |
| Section C | Section E |
| Feeling | Desired emotion |
| (Undesirable emotional response) | |

Listing of Five Criteria

Section A consisted of a subject writing down the facts of the event or situation that occurred and about which he upset himself. This section was a statement of only the objective facts completely devoid of a subjective or arbitrary value judgment. In order to have a check of this section, the subject was told to reread his section as if he were actually recording the situation with a movie camera which, of course, would be recording the subject's situation without any value judgments. If his camera check was free of value judgments, the subject was to write "section A is fact" in section Da. If the camera check revealed that value judgments had been recorded, the subject was to write section A over, and go through the same camera check again. He continued to go through the process until he could record that section A was indeed a factual and objective description of the disturbing event.

Section B was the part of the RSA wherein the subject was asked to write down his evaluating thoughts about the event or situation. In this section the subject stated clearly the self-talk he had used to describe, or react to, the situation. Expecially included were any subjective value judgments and ideas which were a source of the negative emotions and undesired behavior he was having and exhibiting about the situation. The subject then was taught

to challenge each of the statements in section B by writing his challenges in section Db. For example, a subject might write down in section B, "if John hadn't made me take that first drink, I wouldn't have gotten drunk and been arrested." He could challenge that statement by writing in section Db, "John didn't hold me down and force that drink down my throat. I picked the glass up and put it to my lips and swallowed the alcohol on my own. I also picked up and swallowed the liquor in all of the other drinks that were placed in front of me and after drinking those drinks, I became drunk. I got loud and began to fight and the bartender called the police to stop the fight and I was arrested for breaking a law." The subject could even go into more detail with his challenges if he so desired. If the statement written in section B was actual fact, then the subject wrote "fact" beside the statement in section Db.

In section C the subject was asked to write down the emotional label which accurately desribed the emotional response to the particular situation. This section assisted the subject in distinguishing between feelings and thoughts. For example, if the subject had written in section C, "I took those drinks because I felt I was cornered and the situation was hopeless", he would not be recording an emotional response but a thought about the situation. His statement would actually be better recorded in section B, especially after the communication was made more accurate by changing the work "felt" to "thought". The accurate emotional response to be recorded in section C might just simply record one word emotional responses such as "angry", "depressed", etc. in section C.

Section E served as the section wherein the subject wrote a more appropriate, rational feeling response which he desired in that same situation.

The five criteria for rational thinking were always written at the bottom of the RSA so the subject would be able to evaluate his self-talk statements in section B according to the criteria in order to help him with his challenges to the section B statements. They also helped the subject evaluate the appropriateness of his emotional responses in section C and choose more rational emotional responses for section E.

The RSA is the method which draws all the other didactic, cognitive learnings of the first three techniques together and allows them to be taken out of the cognitive realm and used in a practical manner to help individuals analyze their feelings and evaluate the appropriateness of their behavior. Once the subjects used the RSA techniques for a period of time, they began to understand their problems better, gain insights into practical, more rational ways to react to situations, perceive and think about situations objectively, control their emotional responses, and choose the appropriate behavior for which the situation called.

Teaching RSA skills was accomplished by means of didactic presentations, the use of transparencies, audio and video tapes, written exercises, and individual and group discussions. Group RSA's were done on an average of once a week

after the fifth week of training. For each group RSA, a subject volunteer acted as leader. Another subject volunteered a personal RSA for group/peer analysis. The instructor encouraged thorough analyses with constant review of the anatomy of an emotion and the five criteria for rationale.

5. Teaching each subject the use of Rational Emotive Imagery (REI). REI involved the individual doing repeated RSA's on his problem-eliciting behavior. While doing the RSA's, the subject was encouraged to examine his self-talk, and thoroughly challenge the irrational statements. After doing several RSA's, the subject was instructed to imagine himself in a situation which led to problem behavior, such as becoming intoxicated. He was then instructed to relax himself via deep breathing exercises, and then picture himself in the same situation, but this time behaving in the way he would like to behave (e.g., drinking only moderately or walking by the bar without going in). While doing this imagery he was to simultaneously review repeatedly the rational challenges he had written in his RSA's. The subjects were asked to write out or record several REI's before attempting to do them mentally. Once the subjects had learned the REI skills, it was suggested that they do this type of imagery for ten minutes a day at the same time each day.

Teaching REI skills was accomplished through didactic presentations, the use of transparencies, audio and video tapes, written exercises, group discussions, and role-play activities.

The five techniques described above made up the basic training model of RBT used with the experimental group in this study. The organization for the actual classroom activities followed the following format:

First Week

Session #1 - Content: Introduction; goals of course
Materials: Transparencies; handouts
Methods: Lecture; group discussion

Session #2 - Content: Five criteria for rational
Materials: Handouts; workbook, You and Your Emotions
Methods: Lecture; group discussion

Session #3 - Content: Review session #2; anatomy of an emotion
Materials: Workbook pp. 13-15; transparencies
Methods: Lecture; group discussion; written assignment

Second Week

Session #1 - Content: Review anatomy of an emotion; analyzing an emotion
Materials: Transparencies; handouts
Methods: Lecture; group discussion; homework assignment

Session #2 - Content: Discuss homework; group analysis of an emotion
Materials: Workbook; homework assignments
Methods: Group discussion; individual supervision

Session #3 - Content: Relationship between the anatomy of an emotion and five criteria
Materials: Transparencies; workbook, pp. 25-34
Methods: Lecture; group discussion; written assignment

Third Week

Session #1 - Content: Quiz on five criteria; irrational fears
Materials: Handouts; workbook, pp. 35-38; audio-tape, "How to Overcome Irrational Fear of Talking in Front of a Group" by Dr. M.C. Maultsby
Methods: Written exercises; group discussion

Session #2 - Content: Thorough review of five criteria
Materials: Transparencies; workbook, pp. 25-34.
Methods: Group discussion; written assignment

Session #3 - Content: Review of anatomy of an emotion and five criteria; introduction of RSA format; rationale for RSA
Materials: Transparencies; workbook, pp. 43-46.
Methods: Lecture; written assignment

Fourth Week

Session #1 - Content: Exemplary RSA
Materials: Transparencies; workbook, pp. 47-48; RSA forms; audiotapes
Methods: Written assignment; group discussion; individual supervision

Session #2 - Content: Exemplary RSA
Materials: Transparencies; handouts; workbook, pp. 49-60.

Session #3 - Content: An adolescent's view of the anatomy of an emotion
Materials: Video-tape, "The Anatomy of an Emotion"
Methods: Viewing of an experiential event; group discussion

Fifth Week

Session #1 - Content: An adolescent's view of the five criteria for rational behavior
Materials: Video-tape, "Five Criteria of Rational Behavior"
Methods: Viewing of an experiential event; group discussion

Session #2 - Content: Group RSA
Materials: Handouts, blackboard
Methods: Lecture; volunteer group leader; group interaction

Session #3 - Content: Group RSA
Materials: Blackboard
Methods: Volunteer group leader; group interaction

Sixth Week

Session #1 - Content: Rational and irrational fears
Materials: Audio-tape, "How to Tell if Fears are Irrational or Rational" by Dr. M.C. Maultsby
Methods: Lecture; auditory experiential event

Session #2 - Content: Group RSA, "I Don't Want to Be In School"
Materials: Handouts; blackboard
Methods: Volunteer group leader; group interaction; individual supervision

Session #3 - Content: Fallible human being; masturbation
Materials: Transparencies; handouts
Methods: Lecture; group discussion; written assignments

Seventh Week

Session #1 - Content: Rational songs; group RSA on mutual concern
Materials: Handouts, RSA formats; blackboard
Methods: Group interaction; individual supervision

Session #2 - Content: Self-defeating beliefs, group RSA
Materials: Transparencies; workbook, pp. 83-94.
Methods: Lecture, group discussion

Session #3 - Content: Thorough group RSA
Materials: RSA formats; blackboard; handouts to review ABC's of an emotion, five criteria, and a complete RSA format
Methods: Volunteer group leader; group discussion and interaction

Eighth Week

Session #1 - Content: Self-defeating beliefs
Materials: Transparencies; workbook, pp. 94-106.
Methods: Lecture, group interaction

Session #2 - Content: Group RSA with special emphasis on Rational Alternative
Materials: RSA formats; blackboard
Methods: Lecture group interaction

Session #3 - Content: An adolescent's view of RSA
Materials: Video-tape, "How To Do An RSA" (14)
Methods: Viewing of an experiential event; group discussion

Ninth Week

Session #1 - Content: Introduction to REI and rationale
Materials: Transparencies; handouts; REI examples and formats; workbook, pp. 61-70.
Methods: Lecture; group discussion; written assignment

Session #2 - Content: Individual and group REI
Materials: Handouts; blackboard
Methods: Group discussion; individual supervision

Session #3 - Content: RBT with acting-out adolescent
Materials: Audiotape, "RBT Session with Chuck, Acting-Out Adolescent" by Dr. M.C. Maultsby
Methods: Auditory experiential event; group interaction

Tenth Week

Session #1 - Content: Faulty cognitive habits; individual RSA and REI
Materials: Transparencies; handouts; workbook, pp. 73-80
Methods: Lecture; written exercises; individual supervision

Session #2 - Content: Rational and irrational shoulds; group RSA and REI
Materials: Transparencies; handouts; workbook, pp. 106-108.
Methods: Lecture; volunteer group leader; group interaction; written exercises

Session #3 - Content: RBT session with a rational adolescent; how to continue practicing RBT; course evaluation
Materials: Audio-tape, "Successful RBT With an Adolescent"
Methods: Auditory experiential event; group discussion; written exercise

During the ten week training sessions, the subjects in the experimental group were constantly reinforced by the instructor for attending class, completing assigned tasks, and exhibiting rational thinking and behaving. Reinforcement was administered verbally, socially, and through the tangible reinforcer, the signed point sheet. (Refer to Appendix E for samples of handouts, subjects' written work, and a sample point sheet form).

## Research Results and Summary

Eleven research hypotheses were formulated and data on eleven variables were analyzed. Significant differences resulted on four of the eleven analyses at the 105 level. The experimental group demonstrated significant positive change on the RBT Concepts Test, the Common Perception Inventory, the Internal-External Scale, and the Time-Competence Scale of the Personal Orientation Inventory. Difference on the Inner-Directed Support Scale of the Personal Orientation Inventory and all subscales of the Observational Emotional Inventory did not reach significance. It was concluded that RBT training produced positive change in learning and personality variables, but did not influence behavioral variables.

Generally, the study indicated that training was effective in influencing learning of rational concepts and influencing the ability to generalize the concepts into personality structures. However, the training did not seem to effect overt behaviors manifested in the educational milieu. This trend suggests the need for further research including longitudinal studies, studies which incorporate longer experiential training components, and studies which include training for parents and/or teachers. Further research might also explore the effects of training on drug using students, the effects of combining the structured classroom sessions with more informal type training does have potential in special education programs for emotionally disturbed adolescents.

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